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IN DAYS OF OLD.

CLEMANS.



IN DAYS OF OLD

A COLONIAL ROMANCE

IN FIVE ACTS

BY

LOUIS L. CLEMANS

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TO THE MEMORY
OF

THE PATRIOTS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF LIBERTY
AND FELL IN THE DEFENSE OF THEIR
COUNTRY, THIS LITTLE ROMANCE IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

THE AUTHOR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Stephen Prescott,.....	A New York Merchant.
Harold Peyton.....	A Colonial Patriot.
Sidney Wolfe,.....	Major of British Hussars.
Ned Prescott.....	A Fugitive from Justice.
Jack Reynolds.....	A Loyalist Friend.
Dick Prescott.....	The Youngest Brother.
Matthias.....	A Servant to the Prescotts.
Messenger.....	From Continental Army.
John.....	Waiter at the Windsor.
Elizabeth Prescott,.....	Wife of Stephen Prescott.
Nelle Prescott,.....	Jack Reynold's Sweetheart.
Margaret Peyton,.....	The Wife; A Fair Loyalist.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.	Sunday, April 23rd, 1775. The Separation.
ACT II.	December 18th, 1779. The Plot.
ACT III.	Christmas Eve, 1779. Face to Face.
ACT IV.	Christmas Day, 1779. Driven from Home.
ACT V.	April 23rd, 1786. Retribution.

19

COSTUMES.

PERIOD: 1775-1786.

Stephen Prescott: Suit of black.

Harold Peyton: *Act 1.* Suit of black. *Act 3.* Uniform of Captain of Continental Dragoons. Military cloak. *Act 5.* English Court Costume of 1786.

Sidney Wolfe: *Act 2.* Uniform of Major of British Hussars. *Act 5.* English Court Costume of 1786.

Ned Prescott: *Act 1.* Rough seaman's garb of 1775. *Act 4.* Ragged uniform of Continental Army. *Act 5.* English Court Costume of 1786.

Dick Prescott: Private's Uniform of British Hussars.

Jack Reynolds: *Act 1.* Suit of black. *Act 2.* Uniform of Lieutenant of British Hussars. *Act 5.* English Court Costume of 1786.

Matthias: Suit of brown.

Messenger: Farmer's garb, 1775.

Waiter: English Livery of 1786.

Elizabeth Prescott: Martha Washington dress.

Nelle Prescott: Dresses of the period; with handsome English Court Costume for last act.

Margaret Peyton: Handsome gowns of the period.

SCENE PLOT.

Act 1—Parlor in the PRESCOTT home. Fancy Interior boxed in 4. Backed by Street in 5. Large practical window, 6x8, c. in flat, with a practical window seat filling recess. Practical door, L. U. E. Set fireplace, L. 2. E. Large double arch, r. 2. and 3 E; backed by single arch which in turn is backed by fancy interior. Practical winding staircase, r. U. E. with wide steps and heavy balustrade. Table and two chairs, r. c. Sofa, L. c. Other fancy furniture and bric-a-brac to make an elaborate set.

Act 2—Headquarters of MAJOR WOLFE: An apartment in the PRESCOTT home. Center Door Fancy boxed in 3. Backed by Plain Chamber in 4. Set mantle, r. 1. E. Practical doors, r. and L. Fancy table and two chairs, L. c. Divan up R. Center opening in flat, heavily draped.

Act 3—Boudoir of MARGARET PEYTON. Fancy Chamber boxed in 3. Practical door in flat, R. Practical window, two feet and one-half from floor, r. 2. E. Chiffonier, r. 3. E. Bed and canopy, L. Table and two chairs, L. c. Elaborate set.

Act 4—Same set as Act 1. Winter street backing.

Act 5—Fashionable suite of lodgings, London. Supposed to be on second floor. Fancy Interior in 4, boxed. Practical French window, c. in flat, opening on practical balcony with breakaway balustrade. Backed by Exterior showing London housetops. Large arch, L. 2. E. heavily draped with portieres. Practical door, R. 2. E. (Built to break away). Fancy table and chairs, L. c. Fancy divan, R. Mantel, up R. Build platform, two feet high, for balcony, extending inside and just filling window. Two wide steps up to window. Elaborate set as possible.

TIME OF PLAYING—TWO HOURS.

IN DAYS OF OLD.

ACT ONE.

SCENE: *Parlor in the Prescott home.* STEPHEN
PRESCOTT *discovered coming down stairway—goes to window in flat—looks out.*

STEPHEN. This is indeed a splendid spring morning. Strange it is—that this Sabbath day, when our beloved colonies are on the verge of war with the mother country, amid such surroundings—all nature should unite in breathing forth a hymn of gladness, of peace and of beauty. (*Chimes heard in the distance.*) Ah, the bells call us to the house of worship. It is right that we should return thanks for the many blessings that have been showered upon us. Oh! that I could enjoy the beauties of this day, (*down to table.*) but the bitter memories of the past have effaced all hope of pleasure. (*sits right of table.*) 'Twas just such a pretty Sunday morning, one short year ago, that my eldest son, the pride of his father's heart, crushed out all our brightest hopes, when he stood before us, a self-confessed thief. Since that time the dark pall that has enveloped us like a shroud, has never lifted for one moment. Had the ground opened and engulfed him, his disappearance could

not have been more complete and although I should not have hesitated in turning him over to the proper authorities for punishment, I often wonder what has been his fate.

Enter MATTHIAS, L. U. E., comes down.

STEPHEN. Well, Matthias, what's wanting?

MATTHIAS. Please, sir, if you will only forgive me for disobeying your orders. I mean no offense, sir, but I would ask you to grant a favor.

STEPHEN. What is it, Matthias? You well enough know that I never refuse any reasonable request.

MATTHIAS. A friend of mine, or at least, sir, an acquaintance whom I feel very friendly towards, is outside and seems to be very much in need, sir. If you would only see him, sir.

STEPHEN. A friend of yours in distress, Matthias? Who is it?

MATTHIAS. Master Ned, sir. Oh! please, Mr. Prescott, let him come in.

STEPHEN. (*rises*) No, sir! (*crosses, L.*) I have sworn that he shall never darken the threshold of my house again. Even tho' he is my own son, he is a fugitive from justice and must pay—

MATTHIAS. But I beg of you, Mr. Prescott, the lad is ill. He has erred it is true; but, sir, I assure you he is a changed man.

STEPHEN. No doubt, he is changed for the worse. Lucky for him that it is Sunday morning, (*Enter ELIZABETH PRESCOTT and MARGARET PEYTON down stairway*) or I should hand him over to the constable this moment.

MARGARET. (*comes down r.*) Why, father, who is it you would hand over to the officers?

ELIZABETH. (*left of table*) You do not answer. (*pause*) Matthias, to whom does he refer?

MATTHIAS. Master Edward, ma'am.

MARGARET. Ned back!

ELIZABETH. Oh! dear me, my poor boy! Where is he, Matthias, where is he?

MATTHIAS. Waiting in the garden, ma'am. He arrived on the ship last evening, but just came on shore an hour ago.

STEPHEN. He had sense enough to know Sunday was safer.

MATTHIAS. I was down to Valentine's to inquire after his sick daughter and ran across Master Ned upon the dock unawares. He looked so very ill and wretched, ma'am, that I persuaded him to come home with me.

STEPHEN. Don't lie to me. You mean that he persuaded you to come and intercede for him.

MATTHIAS. I beg pardon, sir, he is much changed. He says that he has reformed and I believe he has, for he shows the truest signs of penitence.

ELIZABETH. (*crosses to STEPHEN*) Stephen, you had better tell Matthias to bring him in. If you don't, goodness only knows what he may do.

STEPHEN. Madam, would you have me break the oath I swore, when we learned the infamy which he had heaped upon us.

MARGARET. Oh! papa, think what people will say. If he has reformed —

STEPHEN. Let him show by his future conduct that his reformation is complete, and when he finds that I refuse to look upon him as my son, let him deliver himself like a man—to the law for punishment, and pay the penalty of his crime.

ELIZABETH. Don't, Stephen, don't! I never could endure the shame. A jailbird in our family; I should not dare to show my face in public. Oh, the disgrace!

MARGARET. Papa, you won't send him to prison, will you?

MATTHIAS. Really, if you would only see him; if but for a moment—

ELIZABETH. Stephen, he may wish to make atonement for past. I pray you, grant this one request.

MARGARET. Oh, please do, father!

ELIZABETH. When all nature is at peace—on this ideal spring day—thankfulness to our God for his mercies, should lead us to cherish a spirit of forgiveness. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

STEPHEN. (*crosses to chair, R. of table—sits*) Tell him, he may come.

MATTHIAS. Very well, sir. *Exit L. U. E.*

ELIZABETH. (*crosses to L. of table*) Stephen, for my sake, please do not be too severe with the poor boy. You won't, will you?

NED PRESCOTT *enters L. U. E.—hesitates—then rushes into ELIZABETH PRESCOTT'S arms.*

NED. Mother!

ELIZABETH. Ned, my boy! my boy!

NED. (*by table—offers hand to STEPHEN*) Father!

STEPHEN. (*refuses to take hand*) So you have dared to return. The night is dark, you know enough to do so. Have you forgotten?

NED. Have I forgotten, sir? I wish to Heaven I could forget. I don't know why you deserved to have a son like me, but I have suffered. A fugitive from justice—ashamed to look me in the eye—startled at every little sound—feeling that the hounds of fate were at my heels, dogging my every step,—slowly—surely.

MARGARET. My poor brother!

STEPHEN. You have wrecked your life with your eyes open—it is too late to alter it now.

NED. Father, you haven't had my trials and temptations. You haven't had to endure my sufferings. You haven't had something here—(*hand on breast*) which gnaws and gnaws, day and night, day and night; while the whole world points the finger of scorn and cries aloud the story of your downfall. You may live on; but you are only a husk—a shell—the frame of a man; the good has left you.

STEPHEN. The world seems to have placed you in a very humble mood.

NED. "The way o' the transgressor is hard." When I reached the city of London, two months ago, I was on the verge of despair—the night was bitter cold—I was almost frozen. I saw a bright light in a little chapel. I knew that I could at least find warmth inside—so like the guilty wretch, I am, I crept in unobserved and sank into a pew. The preacher told the story of the prodigal son—how he returned and

was forgiven. I'm a bit like him, sir, and—and—I've came back.

STEPHEN. You can't count on the fatted calf, how ever.

NED. I don't ask it. Bread and water will do for me. My sin was a grievous one: grievously have I atoned! I came back to say that I was sorry—and—to see all of you once more.

STEPHEN. Where do you intend to live and how?

NED. I hardly know. If only I might stay here till I could find employment.

STEPHEN. My intentions were, should you ever again set foot in New York, to have meted out to you the punishment you so richly deserve. I do not give up my intention. I shall only postpone carrying it into execution during your good behavior. You may remain here until you find employment.

NED. Thank you, sir. I dare say it is more than I deserve. I will try to give you no cause to regret doing so. Mother, have you a room for me?

ELIZABETH. Yes, my son, you may have the same old room; it is just as you left it a year ago.

NED. Thank you, mother. (*kisses her*) I will try to get a few hours sleep; I am completely worn out and need rest. *Exit up stairway.*

ELIZABETH. (*crosses to stairs*) I'll call you in plenty of time for dinner. (*at R. 2. E.*) Stephen, do you know that it's time for church? The bell rang quite a while ago.

STEPHEN. As soon as you are ready, we will go.

Exit ELIZABETH, R. 2. E.

STEPHEN. Are you going with us, my daughter?

MARGARET. No, not this morning, father. I have some letters to write, which I am very anxious to send to London, and the vessel sails early tomorrow morning.

STEPHEN. Just as you wish, daughter; but I would not set my mind too firmly on this London trip.

MARGARET. Why not, father?

STEPHEN. There is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Something may happen to change your plans.

MARGARET. If anything should happen, that I could not go, the disappointment would nearly kill me.

STEPHEN. I hope, for your sake, that nothing will happen to prevent your sailing as now arranged, but don't build too many castles in the air. Life is made up of disappointments. Where is Nelle? I haven't had a glimpse of her since breakfast.

MARGARET. She went over to Valentine's with a basket of dainties for their sick daughter, and as yet, has not returned. More than likely she has met Jack Reynolds on the way and they are taking their time in returning.

ELIZABETH. (*outside*) Stephen! are you going with me, or are you going to stand there talking an hour or two longer?

STEPHEN. I'm coming at once, mother. (*Exit R. 2. E.*

MARGARET. I wonder what keeps Harold so long. (*up to window*) He said that he would be gone but half an hour, and it is nearly two hours since he started away. Poor boy, he must have taken a longer

walk than usual; but after a whole week in that dingy old office, he needs plenty of exercise and fresh air. (*down to sofa—sits*) Oh, how good he is to me. We have been married just a month and never for a moment has he ceased to be the attentive and faithful lover. Papa says he is a splendid man at the office, so kind and courteous to all; and for that reason offered Harry the management of the London branch. How happy we shall be in dear old London. Ever since I was a little child I have wished for nothing better than to live in the gay whirl of London society; and now that my wishes are so soon to be gratified, my happiness knows no bounds.

Enter NELLE, unobserved, L. U. E.—slips down behind sofa.

NELLE. Boo! MARGARET *jumps up—screams.*

MARGARET. Oh my! you naughty girl, how you frightened me.

NELLE. Oh, did I? Well, I'm sorry, of course, but it was too good a chance to let slip.

MARGARET. So you take all the chances you get, do you? Well, look out or you may let one chance slip, that you will be sorry for.

NELLE. What are you talking about, anyway?

MARGARET. Your chances of catching Jack. Kate Claxton would make any sacrifice to win him from you.

NELLE. Well, let her have him; I don't care! Yes, I do care, too. But she never knows her own mind. She thought she had caught brother Ned once up on a time, you know.

MARGARET. Oh, Nelle, did you know that Ned is here.

NELLE. In New York?

MARGARET. Yes, at home.

NELLE. Madge, dear, don't jest. Is he really at home again: poor Ned.

MARGARET. Yes, he is in his room upstairs.

NELLE. I am going up and see him this very minute. *(starts for stairway.)*

MARGARET. Don't disturb him; he is ill and wishes to sleep.

NELLE. *(pauses on bottom step)* I don't care; he is my brother and I am going to see—

Re-enter MATTHIAS, hurriedly.

MATTHIAS. Mr. Jack Reynolds.

NELLE. *(comes down)* Bid him enter.

MARGARET. Well, dear, I am going to my room and write my letters.

Enter JACK, L. U. E., as MARGARET reaches stairway.

JACK. Good morning, ladies. *(to MARGARET)* Do not let poor me drive you away.

MARGARET. Oh! certainly not. But I remember the old saying—"Two's company, three's a crowd."

NELLE. She speaks from experience, Jack; she's only been married a month. *(all laugh)*

Exit MARGARET, up stairs.

JACK. Do you think she will change her mind?

NELLE. Oh, yes! they all do.

JACK. How often have I noticed that the weaker sex were very changeable. The poet undoubtedly knew them well when he penned these lines:

“Oh, woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the quivering aspen made.”

NELLE. Let us change the subject. Why were you not at Miss Claxton’s reception, last evening? You promised to come.

JACK. Was it a reception? I thought it was only a tea, and I simply cannot tolerate teas.

NELLE. Well, what great difference is there between a tea and a reception?

JACK. When you go to a tea, they serve tea and cakes; at a reception you get a good, square meal.

NELLE. Oh, I understand. To a man, it is simply a difference in the fare.

JACK. That is a very fair definition.

NELLE. So man, being a worshiper of his stomach, avoids teas; but is seldom absent from receptions.

JACK. I believe that you are partly right. On the other hand, a tea is only an excuse for the gathering together of a lot of women, old and ugly, young and pretty, sombre and sad, gay and witty; so they may admire each other’s gowns to each other’s faces, and afterward make remarks of a different sort in their absence.

NELLE. Don’t you think that my new gown is pretty.

JACK. Who heeds the make of the gown, when the wearer is of divine make.

NELLE. Don't be silly. Had you known the fine compliment Kate passed upon you; you would have attended the reception had it been only a tea.

JACK. What did Miss Claxton say?

NELLE. I won't tell you, 't would make you vain.

JACK. No, it won't!

NELLE. Yes, it will! Don't you think she is very pretty?

JACK. What did she say? I am anxious to know.

NELLE. Yes, I know you are -you always are. She's a very pretty girl, and I've heard you say so, too! You're in love with her, so you are. Well, I don't care; (*half-crying*) you're not the only man in this world.

JACK. Oh, I don't know. There is one girl that thinks so, anyway.

NELLE. I don't! Oh, I mean I'm sure there is nobody that does.

JACK. But there is. Such a pretty girl, too, with such sparkling blue eyes --

NELLE. Jack! My eyes are blue.

JACK. But I didn't say that you were the girl. This girl really cares for me.

NELLE. Oh! Kate Claxton. If I were a man, I would pick out someone who looked like somebody at least.

JACK. People who are not jealous, say she is very pretty.

NELLE. Jealous! Jack Reynolds! I'm not.

JACK. Who said you were?

NELLE. You did. You may think as you please; but you have no right to make such absurd accusations. Jealous, why, Jack, I am surprised at you.

JACK. I know that one woman cannot bear to hear another praised for her good looks or pretty gowns.

NELLE. It is a vice incurred from the frequent examples set us by different members of your sex.

JACK. Imitation is the sincerest flattery. Come, Nelle, we must not quarrel. I should never forgive myself if I said one unkind word to you.

NELLE. Then why do you do so?

JACK. Did I?

NELLE. Yes, you did.

JACK. Nelle! (pause) Nelle! (pause) She's mad. Woman is made of wax. A little love melts her. (goes to her—places arms about her) Nelle, dear, you must forgive me.

NELLE. I don't see why I should.

JACK. But you will, won't you, dear? (kisses her)

NELLE. I don't know.

JACK. Yes, you do. You know you will. Now don't make me coax you.

NELLE. But I like to be coaxed.

JACK. (kissing her again) Now am I forgiven?

NELLE. Just this once; but you must never do it again.

JACK. Even now I haven't the faintest idea what I have done; but here, on my bended knee, I promise never to do it again. Now, tell me, what did Miss Claxton say?

NELLE. She said that you were the handsomest man in New York, and that she had fallen deeply in love with you.

JACK. Sorry I can't return the compliment. She is a pretty girl, of course; but—

NELLE. You confess it?

JACK. I can't help it: she is pretty enough, as girls go—

NELLE. As girls go—I like that.

JACK. But, my dear, you cannot compare mere prettiness with royal beauty like yours.

NELLE. Now, Jack, you know you don't really think me pretty.

JACK. Nelle, if you will but look through my eyes into the innermost recesses of my heart, you will find mirrored there but one face—peerless in its beauty and love—your own.

NELLE. Then you do love me a little?

JACK. Love you? How much I cannot find words to express; but more than anything else in all this world. Have I not told you so, hundreds of times.

NELLE. But I like to hear you say it again and again.

JACK. Oh, you little rogue! (*kisses her—she breaks away—he chases her around stage.*)

NELLE. Don't! here comes Harry.

Enter HAROLD PEYTON, L. U. E.

HAROLD. Hello! playing tag on Sunday morning? Why, Nelle, ain't you ashamed?

NELLE. No, I ain't!

HAROLD. Well, Jack, have you heard any late news from Boston?

NELLE. (*angrily*) You two make me weary!

HAROLD. Why, Nelle! What's wrong now?

NELLE. Oh, nothing! Only Jack and you are eternally and all the time talking war. You have discussed the "Boston Tea Party" until I can't even look at a cup of tea. I am going up to Margaret's room, and I am going to stay there till you get this war fought and settled to your mutual satisfaction. You make me tired.

Exit up stairway.

JACK. (*sits on sofa*) No, nothing definite. But I have finally arrived at the conclusion, that at last we stand on the brink of the precipice—with a chasm of unknown depth yawning at our feet.

HAROLD. (*L. of table*) You are right. The crisis is at hand and the events of the coming week will most certainly decide the momentous question of peace or war. If the colonies go to the extent of openingly firing upon the flag of Great Britain, a few days will determine if the victory is to be a bloodless one, or if peace is to be purchased at the price of war.

JACK. General Gage has most surely had things his own way so far, and if the boasted "minute men" dared to fight, they would by this time have shown some symptoms of it. You may depend upon this one fact: the Continental army will never fire a gun as long as the "red-coats" show a bold front.

HAROLD. I wish I could view matters in the same light, Jack, but I have lived among the colonists for

fifteen years and I am sure that the British underestimate their bravery and patriotism.

JACK. It is impossible to underestimate any manly quality in a colonial "rebel," who refuses allegiance to King George III.

HAROLD. Yes, I understand that such is the general opinion of the loyal subjects of the British crown yet I, myself, have met many brave men among these patriots, who would face danger of any magnitude without shrinking, and prove themselves worthy adversaries of any foe.

JACK. I cannot agree with you, Harold. Your patriotic "rebels" may be brave enough during times of peace, but it is war, with all its attendant horrors that gives birth to patriotism. Should the men under General Gage come in contact with the "rebel" volunteer army, and their boasted "minute men" have a chance to smell burnt powder, what would be the effect?

(horses' hoofs heard in the distance, gradually growing nearer.)

HAROLD. The effect, sir, will be that of a torch applied to a train of powder. Every city and town will be a camp, every cross-road a rallying point. The colonies will put forth every effort, and although the entire country be devastated by fire and sword; the cause will not be lost. *(up to window.)*

JACK. No! for the rebellion will be crushed out!
MESSENGER *rides on back of window—horse covered with foam—both rider and horse appear worn out.*

MESSENGER. Whoa!

HAROLD. (*opens window*) Friend, you ride as if good horses were as plenty as worthless dragoons.

MESSENGER. Neither horse nor man is spared in the service of the Continental army. I am seeking Stephen Prescott.

HAROLD. Mr. Prescott is at church; any trouble?

MESSENGER. Well, now, I guess, trouble is no name for it. I'm bringing news from Massachusetts. (*slaps hands on papers in coat pocket.*)

JACK. Has anything happened at Boston?

MESSENGER. Well, no, not just at Boston. But out Concord way and at Lexington, and on the high road back to Boston, I reckon as how a few things had happened. You see, sirs, it was this way: On last Tuesday night, General Gage sent a secret expedition, under command of Major Pitcairn, from Boston, to arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock at Lexington, and to seize and destroy the military stores collected at Concord. Our patriots were on the watch, and at the first move, hung a signal from the tower of Old North Church. A silversmith, Paul Revere, by name, rode like a madman through the country, spreading the news, "The 'regulars' are coming!" At daybreak, the British arrived at Lexington to find fifty "minute men" drawn up on the village green. The advance guard fired upon them, and seven brave men fell; but they held their ground until the main body of the regulars came up. Then they gave way and the "red coats" pushed on to Concord. There they failed to find any stores; but affairs

took a sudden turn. Five hundred British regulars, who were guarding Concord bridge, were driven back by several hundred "minute men" who had hastily arrived from the neighboring towns. The position of British became perilous and at noon they started for Boston, exposed to a galling fire from all sides. Exhausted by an eighteen mile march and no provisions, they were soon put to rout, and entered Boston on the full run; leaving about three hundred dead to mark the path of their flight. But I must be on my way, these messages are important. (*rides off—sound of galloping hoofs dies away in the distance.*)

HAROLD. (*closes window—comes down*) The words of Patrick Henry have at last come true. "There is no longer room for hope—we must fight!"

JACK. The British will wreak dire vengeance upon the Continental army for this blow.

HAROLD. (*L. of table*) They may attempt it; but the fight at Concord bridge will cause the colonies to stand more closely together.

JACK. (*rises*) Aye, against the rebellious party.

HAROLD. When I spoke of the colonies, I referred to what you are pleased to call the rebellious party.

JACK. The rebels are not in the majority, therefore you can not say that they represent the colonies.

HAROLD. Pardon me, Jack, we shall find that they are in the majority, at least, outside of the larger towns. This news will fly to every corner of our country, as fast as brave men on fleet-footed steeds can carry it; and put the country folk in readiness for whatever the Continental Congress may decide.

to do. This first shot will yet be heard around the world.

Enter NELLE, down stairway.

JACK. Their activity will put the loyal subjects of the British crown on their guard, ready for what these few "rebels" may attempt.

HAROLD. (*rises*) Don't call the colonists "rebels." They are good honest people striving to throw off the foot of the oppressor and only ask that they may at least have a voice in the dictation of the laws under which they must live. Once for all, I say, this is my country, may she always be right; but my country, right or wrong!

NELLE. Bravo! Harry.

Enter STEPHEN and ELIZABETH, R. 2. E., come down R.

STEPHEN. Have you heard the news?

HAROLD. Yes, I think we were among the first to hear it.

STEPHEN. Nothing short of a miracle can prevent war now. The service was just closing when a messenger rode up to the church door with the startling news. The entire assemblage was electrified by his account of the battle at Lexington. Captain Graham at once ordered out his company of volunteers, and will hasten to join the Continental army at Boston.

NELLE. (R. C.) Well, I don't care: I will not believe we shall have war, until I see the troops marching through these very streets.

Enter MARGARET, down stairs.

ELIZABETH. Let us talk of something else. The very thought of war makes my blood run cold.

HAROLD. My dear ladies, I believe it is best to think of this war as if it were even now at our doors, and thus fortify ourselves to endure its horrors. I shall teach Margaret to do so.

MARGARET. (*down c.*) What care I, whether war is declared or not. 'Tis only a few short weeks until we shall be safe in England.

HAROLD. But if war is declared, the date of our sailing must be postponed.

MARGARET. Postponed! for how long?

HAROLD. Until this question of peace or war is decided.

ELIZABETH. Why should you concern yourself about the colonies and their troubles? King George has soldiers enough.

Ned appears on stairs--listens--comes slowly down.

HAROLD. You are right: 'tis the colonies will need the soldiers.

MARGARET. Then why must we stay?

HAROLD. That I may take my part in it, Margaret.

JACK. Bravo! Harry--neither of us shall forfeit a chance to fight for our king.

HAROLD. Not for your king shall I be fighting; but for the cause of American Independence.

STEPHEN. My boy, I am proud to grasp you by the hand.

NED. (*c.*) Harold, I shall go with you. I am only a poor outcast--a fugitive from justice--friendless

and alone—knocked about from pillar to post—what better fate than to die in defense of my country!
(*shakes hands with HAROLD.*)

STEPHEN. My son, you have spoken nobly. Now is the chance to retrieve your good name. I freely forgive you the many hours of anguish which you caused, and will earnestly pray for your success.

ELIZABETH. So the rebels have made converts even in my own house.

STEPHEN. Madam, are you not loyal to the colonies?

ELIZABETH. Sir! I am a Van Astor.

MARGARET. Good! No one shall destroy our allegiance to our king, mother. Do you understand that, Mr. Harold Peyton?

HAROLD. Mr. Prescott, since we are become rebels against the king: our wives pay us in the same coin, and turn rebels against their husbands.

MARGARET. This is no time for jests. One thing alone concerns me—my visit to London. Oh! Harry, you will not disappoint me, will you, dear?

HAROLD. I do not wish to disappoint you; but my place is here. Honor demands it. When I am confronted by the awful truth, I feel that to stand idly by, or to leave in the hour of such deadly peril to my country, would be to forfeit my own self-respect and invite the just contempt of all loyal, patriotic men. We must wait.

MARGARET. You have no right to make me wait. You have made promises, and you must redeem them. You told me long ago that we should go to London on

the first of June; since then—day and night, I have thought of it—dreamed of it—until it has become a part of my very existence; and now you say that we must wait, at least, months—perhaps, years. You have deceived me—the woman, whom you promised to cherish, honor and obey, until death do us part. And I have loved you as no woman ever loved before. I thought you the very soul of honor: but, ever since the day when first we met, you have been a living lie—winning a woman's love under a false pretense. 'Tis the height of treachery—the act of a coward. A man of common honesty would keep his word: but you, a gentleman, who have said you would make any sacrifice to insure my happiness, decline to grant my one request. 'Tis cruel—unjust.

HAROLD. Don't you understand, Margaret, my love, one has no choice when patriotism dictates. I would make any sacrifice that an honest man can make for your sake; but—

ELIZABETH. Harold, you have your wife and your own future to consider. Remember that your first thought should be for each other's happiness, and if you refuse my daughter's request, you will break her heart.

MARGARET. Oh! Harry, my love, think how I have set my heart on going. For my sake, my love, sweetheart, do not remain. Say we shall go, Harry, and you'll make me, oh! so happy.

HAROLD. My dear Margaret, I shouldn't be a man if I left America at this time. If I did; if I were to discard honor and trample upon principle,

your own true heart would be the first to turn from me in contempt. I should not be worthy of you.

MARGARET. Worthy! Is any man worthy of a woman, when he repays her love with such cruelty? You talk of principle—of honor—when you speak of your country's demands upon you. In God's name, what claim has the colonies upon you, equal to the claim of your own wife? Is honor but a cloak to put on and off at will? Oh! Harry, you are only jesting are you not—just trying to test the depth of my love—you will keep your promise—won't you, dear.

HAROLD. It was not exactly a promise, dear.

MARGARET. It was a promise—as sacred as any promise ever made. If you wish to keep my love—fulfill this pledge; if you do not, you break my heart and instead of my warmest love, will receive nothing but my deepest hatred and contempt. You must choose now. Make this sacrifice for me—you must—you shall. If you don't, I'll hate you—I'll hate you! *(sinks into chair by table)*

HAROLD. Margaret, dear, you are not yourself.

MARGARET. *(rises)* More than ever myself and my own mistress, too. Speak, I command you! Shall we go? Will you do as your wife wishes?

HAROLD. I will do as your husband ought!

MARGARET. Shall we sail for London in June?

HAROLD. No! I shall stay till the fate of the colonies are decided, and to fight for them if need be!

MARGARET. So this is the depth of the great love which you professed for me. A love which is only governed by the whims and selfish motives of it's

master. A love which can cast the pure love of an honest woman aside for the sake of a crazy notion of patriotism. Very well, sir, how I shall hate you for it. (HAROLD *steps toward her.*) Do not touch me, Harold Peyton; here you and I part forever. Not only does your choice place an unsurmountable barrier between us; but even as water slowly dropped, drop by drop, upon living embers will destroy them; so will your perfidy and the memory of my wrongs, reduce the warm and tender passion I once felt to the dead ashes of indifference. Your wife in name, I still must be; but I would rather beg, starve, die! than link myself to the misery of an existence to be dragged out with you! (*starts up stairway.*)

HAROLD. (*pleadingly*) Margaret!

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE: *Headquarters of Major Sidney Wolfe.*
JACK REYNOLDS *enters hurriedly, c. d., at rise of curtain.*

JACK. I wonder where Nelle can be? I have searched for her everywhere. I am only off duty for an hour and must see her. I can't understand her at all. But where in all this wide world will you find a woman that you can understand? She professes to love me dearly, and yet at the dance last evening, she ignored me entirely and seemed so devoted to Captain McLean. I want an explanation and I'm going to have it. I wonder if she really does love me and is only trying to tease. This love is a funny thing.

Enter NELLE, d. r.

JACK. "Mysterious love—uncertain treasure,
Hast thou more of pain or pleasure!
Endless torments dwell about thee;
Yet who would live, and live without thee!
(sinks into chair, r. of T.) Oh! dear. (sighs)

NELLE. (*crosses to C.*) What a sigh! Are you in pain?

JACK. In pain? No; a hundred times worse than that—I am in love!

NELLE. No!

JACK. Yes!

NELLE. You in love! (*laughs*) The idea—with whom?

JACK. With you.

NELLE. Never!

JACK. Forever! (*sighs*)

NELLE. And does that make you sigh?

JACK. It's enough to make any fellow sigh. The worst part of it—I know that you love another.

NELLE. Another! Who?

JACK. Captain McLean. I noticed your adoration taking complete control of you last evening.

NELLE. Why should you care? There are plenty of girls, "all the world loves a lover."

JACK. Yes; except the girl the lover loves.

NELLE. There is one thing that I can never believe.

JACK. And that is—

NELLE. That you will ever fall seriously in love with anyone. You are too jealous hearted.

JACK. Do not forget the old adage: "There is no true love without jealousy."

NELLE. Nonsense! Jealousy is but another name for the green-eyed monster of distrust. True love is not jealous?

JACK. So you think that only these English captains love—and love truly?

NELLE. Yes; one woman at a time.

JACK. Well, I am only a lieutenant now, maybe I will win promotion and learn a captain's way. Nelle, don't you really and truly love me?

NELLE. No; I love your uniform.

JACK. 'Tis not the clothes that make the man.

NELLE. That is true enough, but many times it is the uniform that makes the soldier.

JACK. Captain McLean deserved his promotion; such bravery merits reward. He attracts a great amount of attention. As a general rule, man attracts attention only at his birth, at his wedding and at his funeral. But since you have declared that only the English captains love truly; I am doubly glad for your sake.

NELLE. Jack, a woman craves admiration; and just because the Captain seemed to enjoy my company, you are angry with me.

JACK. A woman may be for all men to admire, but she is for the happiness of only one.

NELLE. And every man thinks himself the "only one." (*takes white rose, from her corsage, and hands it to JACK*) In the language of flowers, Jack, the white rose is for "silent love"—a love too deep for words. A love, deep and true—a love, that waits patiently and believes—a love that trusts implicitly. Such a love every true woman gives—such a love every pure woman has a right to expect. Such a love I offer—such a love I demand. You are determined

to have it, that I am in love with Captain McLean.
I am in love——

JACK. Oh! (*sighs*)

NELLE. With some one else.

JACK. See here, Nelle, I want to know—I have a right to know—who is it you are in love with? Some major or colonel, I suppose.

NELLE. No, only a lieutenant.

JACK. Only a lieutenant! My equal in rank; I'll call him out. Where is he? Where is he, I say? What's his name?

NELLE. John Quincy Reynolds.

JACK. Me! Then why did you flirt with all the others, and not even condescend a glance toward me?

NELLE. I wished to see if you cared. Say, Jack, do you know what I would do, if you should try to kiss me?

JACK. No! Why?

NELLE. Oh, nothing, only you don't seem to have any curiosity.

JACK. (*aside*) I'm going to settle this right now.
(*aloud*) Nelle, I warn you that you have only fifteen minutes of grace.

NELLE. (*frightened*) Why, what do you mean?

JACK. The time has come! It is just thirteen minutes, thirteen seconds and three-quarters till two o'clock. At two o'clock, I leave you, perhaps forever. I must report to Major Wolfe for orders and may be sent from New York, and you will have lost your last chance.

NELLE. My last chance!

JACK. Yes, your last chance, to make me a happy man for life. Will you be my—

NELLE. (*toys with rings*) Don't be silly.

JACK. Nelle, if you don't say "yes," I'll be a crusty old bachelor all the rest of my days.

NELLE. As if I cared! (JACK *takes her hands*)

Enter SIDNEY WOLFE, C. D.

JACK. Don't you, really, dear?

NELLE. (*lays head on his shoulder*) Of course, you stupid. (*just as JACK goes to kiss her*)

SIDNEY. Ahem! (*they are confused*) Lieutenant, that is hardly a military manouvre.

NELLE. Major Wolfe. I think you are perfectly horrid. *Runs off stage, L.*

JACK. Major, I think you might have made a little noise before you came in—and saved Miss Prescott this embarrassment.

SIDNEY. My boy, I think you yourself was to blame for the embarrassing position. She rather seemed to enjoy it. You appear to be well acquainted with Miss Nelle.

JACK. Yes, I have known the family intimately for about ten years. Her youngest brother, Dick, and I have been comrades in peace as well as in war.

SIDNEY. Then you are, no doubt, well acquainted with Captain Peyton and wife?

JACK. Fully as well.

SIDNEY. When did they last hear from Captain Peyton?

JACK. About two years ago. He was wounded at Saratoga, and reported to have died in the hospital a few days later.

SIDNEY. Does his wife believe him dead?

JACK. As to that I am unable to say. Margaret was always a lover of romances; her highest ambition to shine in the fashionable society of London. Her father had offered her husband control of the London branch, and they were making preparations to go, when the news of Lexington came. She insisted on immediate departure; he refused and she parted from him in anger. From that day to this she has never uttered his name.

SIDNEY. But did not the news of his death affect her?

JACK. If so, she showed no outward sign. Yet it must have nearly broken her heart; he loved her so.

SIDNEY. You spoke of Dick, as the younger brother? Is there an older son?

JACK. Yes, though they never mention his name. Poor reckless Ned

SIDNEY. What has become of him?

JACK. If all that one hears is true, he is in the rebel camp at Morristown.

SIDNEY. (*at table, writing*) Lieutenant! take this report to headquarters at once; I had nearly forgotten it. (JACK *salutes and exits R.*) So, my pretty Margaret, I have at last unearthed the family skeleton and fathomed your secret. No wonder you asked me so many questions about the gayeties of the English Court. Ah, Margaret, you are a poor, romantic

little fool; but so much the better for me. I always admire a pretty face; but such rare beauty as yours is worth fighting for and if I have not lost all my accomplishments in this American wilderness, I will win your love and lead you, my captive, to London. I wonder if Captain Peyton is really dead or alive. (*tap at door*) Enter!

Enter MARGARET, D. R.

MARGARET. I crave your pardon for intruding, Major Wolfe; but I wish to speak with you.

SIDNEY. Will you be seated? Now what can I do for you?

MARGARET. You already know that my father is in sympathy with the American cause. One brother is in the rebel army and my husband was an American officer.

SIDNEY. (*aside*) She thinks him dead. (*aloud*) Yes.

MARGARET. Now I am a Tory at heart, and wish to aid the cause of King George III.

SIDNEY. In what way.

MARGARET. In any way that lies in my power.

SIDNEY. Being a woman, I am afraid that you can accomplish very little.

MARGARET. Sir, the strength of American arms in war comes from the soldiers' memory of the women they have left behind.

SIDNEY. If I can aid you in any manner, command me.

MARGARET. Oh, sir, if you will only lend me your assistance, there will be no chance of failure.

SIDNEY. What would you have me do?

MARGARET. Choose fifteen trusted men from your command; place yourself at their head and report to me for a secret expedition. Then if you will follow my instructions, you can obtain a great prize; one which will secure you promotion, bring me fame and win for us both the recognition of the King himself.

SIDNEY. I may not be successful.

MARGARET. That rests with you. If my plans are faithfully carried out you cannot fail. Will you attempt it?

SIDNEY. Explain your plan.

MARGARET. No! not one word; till you promise to make the attempt.

SIDNEY. I promise.

MARGARET. Then swear to me, on your sacred word of honor—

SIDNEY. On my sacred word of honor—

MARGARET. As a soldier of the king—

SIDNEY. As a soldier of the king—

MARGARET. Promise never to betray my trust.

SIDNEY. I promise never to betray your trust.

MARGARET. My plan is to kidnap General George Washington, Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.

SIDNEY. Impossible!

MARGARET. No! nothing is impossible to one whose motto is to "do and dare!"

SIDNEY. If successful your name shall be heralded from one corner of the universe to another and be emblazoned on history's page for all time to come.

MARGARET. Aye, to me, as to yourself, it means much. A name to be proud of as the years roll by. I have planned for our mutual gain. I have chosen you, because—because—

SIDNEY. Because—

MARGARET. Because—I trust you.

SIDNEY. What assurance have I, that this is not a plot to deliver me into the hands of the Continental army?

MARGARET. If you doubt my sincerity, take my brother Dick with your detail. You surely cannot think me base enough to deliver him to the enemy.

SIDNEY. Enough! I will do your bidding. When is the appointed time?

MARGARET. Christmas eve. Tomorrow, choose from among your command fifteen men whose loyalty and daring are beyond question. At the appointed hour you will place yourself at their head and by a deserted road hasten to the rendezvous. A guide in waiting will conduct you within the rebel lines. By a bold dash, seize Washington and outride pursuit. I will furnish you the pass-word and countersign of the rebel camp and other necessary information later.

SIDNEY. You must have powerful friends inside the lines to obtain this for you.

MARGARET. I have, indeed. If successful, will you give me due credit for the planning of this undertaking?

SIDNEY. Can you doubt me?

Enter DICK, c. d., unobserved.

SIDNEY. Would not gratitude alone, for this reparation of my fortunes, bind me as your slave, if you had not now chains more powerful?

DICK. *(comes down c.)* Major Wolfe! I wish to speak with my sister—alone.

SIDNEY. Most certainly. *Exit D. R.*

DICK. Margaret, I am surprised. Is it possible that you have so far forgotten yourself as to come here—alone. What mean these daily meetings with Major Wolfe? Do you forget that you are Harold Peyton's wife? Oh, sister, that it should come to this!

MARGARET. You silly boy, there is no harm in my coming here. You are too young to understand all you see.

DICK. Perhaps I am; but I can understand when a sister's honor calls for action, and I shall assert a brother's right.

MARGARET. You have no right to dictate to me, even though you are my brother.

DICK. Then if not as your brother, I have as your husband's friend; for by heavens! I am Harry's friend and in his absence, I dare to act in his stead. If I may not defend my sister's honor, I may the honor of Harold Peyton's wife. I'll kill Major Sidney Wolfe. *Starts toward D. R.*

MARGARET. *(detains him)* No, no, Dick—stay—listen to me—for God's sake, just a moment. You are mistaken. There is no guilt in my conduct with

Major Wolfe. I have not compromised my husband's honor.

DICK. Your anxiety for his safety betrays you. Let me go!

MARGARET. No, no! I came here on important business—a council of war.

DICK. And do you think me fool enough to believe such idle tales as that? What great secret of state, do you, a woman, know?

SIDNEY. (*outside*) Lieutenant, you are prompt.

JACK. (*outside*) I strive to do my duty, sir.

MARGARET. Major Wolfe is returning, and he shall explain all. You dare not betray us—you would disgrace the uniform you wear, and be a traitor to your king if you did.

Re-enter SIDNEY and JACK.

MARGARET. Major Wolfe, my brother desires to share our secret. Perhaps, you can prevail upon him to join in the venture.

SIDNEY. The names of Lieutenant Reynolds and Hussar Prescott are both upon my list of loyal subjects of King George III, whom I have chosen for this secret expedition.

MARGARET. And a successful termination means wealth and fame for us all.

JACK. My dear madam, do not further excite our curiosity. What is the plan?

MARGARET. Lieutenant, are you willing and ready to strike a blow for your king?

JACK. Aye, now and forever!

MARGARET. Then listen. After four years of warfare, maintained at an almost fabulous cost, Great Britain has accomplished very little, and the end is not yet in sight. Now, if by one single blow, with no cost, this war could be ended, think what it would mean to England and her king. This blow can and must be dealt by a mere handful of men, in one short night's work; but it takes courage, daring and skill.

JACK. 'Tis folly to think of such a thing.

MARGARET. No, it is not folly. Look at the situation. The American Congress quarrels and plots, disturbs its own army and accomplishes nothing. The rebel army is famishing for food and raiment; mutiny and desertion are threatened every moment. Yet in spite of discord in their own ranks, in spite of the horrors of starvation during the bitter winter campaigns, in spite of the fact that Congress, the army and the people are at sword's points, the army is held together. What holds them together? Remove the cause and the conflict is ended.

DICK. Well, my pretty Demosthenes, what the cause—what the remedy?

MARGARET. The cause—Washington! Remove him from command of the Continental army, and the rebellion would fade away like mist before the morning sun. He must be put out of the way!

JACK. What! Assassinate him!

SIDNEY. Certainly not. Capture him and transport him.

JACK. Capture him, indeed. Haven't the British army been trying to do the same thing for four years?

SIDNEY. Not as my Lady Margaret has planned it, for while to me and the gallant men I have chosen as comrades has been delegated the honor of execution, to Mrs. Peyton alone belongs the honor of creation. Christmas eve, by a secluded path, I will lead a selected band of Hussars to the appointed rendezvous. From there a friendly "rebel" will lead us to a point near the general's headquarters. Then by a swift dash through the lines, we will seize the commander-in-chief and outride all pursuit.

JACK. It has been tried before and always met an ignominious failure.

SIDNEY. True; but they lacked the one advantage we possess—a confederate in their own camp.

DICK. (*to MARGARET.*) And you have obtained that through brother Ned—the contemptible scoundrel. It is a strange role for Captain Peyton's wife; a conspirator against her husband's commander.

MARGARET. No! Had I not a king, before Harold Peyton had a commander?

SIDNEY. Be that as it may. There is much to be done. (*sits at table—writes hurriedly*) I will at once request General Clinton for permission to make the necessary detail. (*gives papers to DICK*) Report to General Clinton at once! Lieutenant! you may go.

Exit JACK and DICK, c. d.

SIDNEY. (*to MARGARET as she starts to go*) A word first! Don't go till I have spoken it. A word did I say! A thousand tremble on my tongue, but each and all bearing the same import. Margaret, I love you.

MARGARET. No, no! you must not speak so to me; not now.

SIDNEY. Yes, now! Oh! my beloved, say that the rapture which floods my heart shall not be felt in vain. If our plans succeed, will you not requite me for the part I play? I know how poor, how unworthy I must seem; but grant me hope—the hope that you will one day bless my life; and I swear to devote that life to your happiness.

MARGARET. Sir! do you forget to whom you are speaking? that I am the wife of Captain Harold Peyton.

SIDNEY. No, I do not forget. I know only too well. Oh, Margaret! cast off the chains that bind you to a man who never has and never can appreciate you as I would. He did not truly love you or he would not have broken your heart by enlisting in the rebel army against your wishes.

MARGARET. You have no right to pass judgment upon his actions—I have not the right to listen to your protestations; he is still my husband.

SIDNEY. He is your soul's destroyer—I would be your rescuer now, your comforter in the future.

MARGARET. Say no more! I must go. (*he detains her*) Let me pass!

SIDNEY. Nay, Margaret, hear me. You are now wedded to a man who is indifferent to your worth and in urging you to shake off the shackles that drag you down, I will not acknowledge that I am doing any thing that deserves to be condemned.

MARGARET. Tempt me not, I beg of you. Even though my husband has turned traitor to me, does not justify my turning traitor to myself.

SIDNEY. Ah! you still love him.

MARGARET. No! I hate him and shall until eternity.

SIDNEY. Two years have passed since the news came of his death. Can you not give into my keeping the love which he trampled upon? I swear to you, on my honor in this world and my hopes of the next, you shall never regret the step!

MARGARET. You know not what you say. A man offers his love to a woman and gives her a home; but his inclinations prompted by his own heart, bid him walk forth from that home to conquer fresh fields. You may think that you me now, and perhaps, for a few short years, so long as my youth shall last, you will care for me; but without beauty woman is nothing, and my youth will fade. My heart and intelligence will ripen; but only a true heart can value them.

SIDNEY. Listen, Margaret, you are the only woman I have ever loved. You have cast the spell of your grace, your beauty and your intellect upon me so that I have no true existence, apart from your dear influence, and I ask—nay, implore you, that you will share the life that you have awakened.

MARGARET. Awakened! I!

SIDNEY. You! Till I met you, that life was not—I was carried along in the current of passing events, but now—I live! If I succeed—give me your loving

aid, your encouragement for life as you have in this venture, and I will be your slave; refuse me, and—

MARGARET. (*quickly*) If I refuse you—

SIDNEY. I shall become, Heaven alone knows what. Think of the great risk I am running for your sake. One false step, and I die an infamous death, the fate of a spy. Oh! my darling! you will not send me from you!

MARGARET. (*faintly*) No, no, I cannot!

SIDNEY. It is true, then—you love me, Margaret. (*takes ring from his finger*) This ring is an heirloom of our family and has been handed down from one generation to the next. And it has never yet been worn in dishonor. I place it upon your finger as a sacred pledge of my affection. (*places ring on her finger*) May this circlet of gold without beginning or end, symbolize the purity of the love between us; and its endless duration, the immortality of the vows which unite us! Now, darling, let me hear your own sweet lips speak my fate.

MARGARET. (*dreamingly*) What would you have me say?

SIDNEY. Say: I love you, Sidney, I am yours now and forever.

MARGARET. I love you, Sidney. (*in his arms.*

Enter DICK and NELLE, C. D.

MARGARET. I am yours, now and forever. (SIDNEY *kisses her*)

DICK. (*comes down*) Margaret, go to your room!

MARGARET. (*crosses to NELLE*) Oh, sister!

SIDNEY. (R. C.) What right have you to interfere?

DICK. (L. C.) The right of any man to defend his sister's honor!

Enter JACK, C. D.

SIDNEY. (*draws sword*) You insolent puppy, you shall fight for this!

DICK. (*calmly*) Fight with you, I cannot. You have betrayed a sacred hospitality— you are a disgraced man!

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT THREE.

SCENE: *Boudoir of MARGARET PRESCOTT. Clock strikes seven as curtain rises. MARGARET is discovered at a window.*

MARGARET. They have just crossed the river—in four hours from now, they should be homeward bound, flushed with the success of their venture. (*crosses to table, L. C.*) How slowly the hours will drag along till their return. (*sits at table.*) I wonder why Sidney did not come to bid me good-bye. I did not expect Dick. Poor Dick—how he worries over that 'little affair of a few night's ago.

Enter NELLE, D. F.

NELLE. Still in the dumps, Margaret, what is the matter with you?

MARGARET. Nothing—except that I am unhappy.

NELLE. You have no cause for complaint. Happily married as you were to one of the world's noblemen, you had the brightest of prospects in store for you; but for the sake of a foolish romantic fancy, you let him go to the war without a word of farewell or even a wish for his safe return. I feel sorry for you

Margaret—and I pity Harold. His burden must be heavy, for if ever a man worshiped a woman, Harold Peyton worshiped you.

MARGARET. Harold Peyton never loved me, or he would never have defied me as he did. I hate even his memory.

NELLE. Hush, sister, not one word of reproach. He was your husband and fell in defense of his country's flag. Let his name remain sacred. (*sees ring*) Margaret, where did you get that ring?

MARGARET. (*embarrassed*) You have no right to question me. You forget yourself!

NELLE. No, I do not forget myself. I have seen that ring too often upon another's hand. I have the right to demand why my sister is wearing Major Wolfe's ring, without the consent or knowledge of her husband!

MARGARET. My husband! I have no husband. In a moment of folly I linked myself to one whom I thought I loved. Later on, he basely deserted me, and by his own action, has released me from every obligation.

NELLE. He is still your husband, Margaret, and I am sure loves you as sincerely now as upon your marriage morn. Wedding vows are sacred, and no one has the right to violate them with impunity. Death alone is the only divorce.

MARGARET. Then I am free. Two years ago, Harold Peyton was found dead upon the battlefield. My divorce is absolute.

NELLE. The report of your husband's death was merely a rumor—but, whether living or dead, let the memory of his love and kindness keep you from all harm. Oh! why do you wear Sidney Wolfe's ring?

MARGARET. Simply because I choose to do so.

NELLE. Sister, were the vows you made to me, only one week ago, all false; when you swore that you never loved this man?

MARGARET. I know not what I said. My brain was afire, and in the excitement of the hour, thought only of his safety.

NELLE. Margaret, you swore to me that you did not love Sidney Wolfe; that in the brief delirium of the passing moment, you had forgotten all else, save his protestations of love.

MARGARET. Then I lied. Hear me now, sister, declare once for all; that I do love Sidney Wolfe passionately—with all the love which I am capable of bestowing. He is my heart's idol! my king of kings!

NELLE. Oh, sister, have you fallen so low? Have you so little respect for your own womanhood, so little regard for your family, so little love for your husband?

MARGARET. Every woman has the right to obey her heart's commands; her life is her own, whether it be for weal or woe.

NELLE. This can continue no longer. I shall tell brother Dick at once.

MARGARET. No, no, you must not! He will provoke a duel and pay his life as the penalty. Sidney is too far his superior in the art of war.

NELLE. Then with his own blood he will wash out this stain upon the Prescott name. Better he die in defense of our family's honor, than live at the price of a sister's shame! *Exit D. F.*

MARGARET. Under his influence, the brief delirium of the past fades into oblivion, for I now know I never loved before. If I go with him, the sin is not his, but mine—mine alone. The temptation well-nigh overpowers me. On one hand, I see a life of love, peace and happiness—a life with him whom I love; on the other hand, a bitter explanation, and then—the inevitable parting. Before me lie two paths: one leading to an existence amid the gayeties of London society; the other to the unbearable misery which now surrounds me. O, Heaven, forgive me, I—I cannot lose him. Send me poverty, disgrace, the hard world's scorn, but leave me my love—oh! leave me my love!

Enter HAROLD, window in flat.

HAROLD. (*arms outstretched*) Margaret!

MARGARET. Ah! (*shrinks from him*) You here!

HAROLD. Yes, 'tis I, Harold, your husband! (*he starts toward her—she steps back*) Don't be frightened.

MARGARET. They told me that you were killed at Saratoga. I thought you dead.

HAROLD. And you seem disappointed because the report proved false.

MARGARET. No, no! but why did you come here, tonight.

HAROLD. Because I loved you so dearly, that I could no longer stay away.

MARGARET. Do you not know that your life is in danger; that you are in the very heart of the British forces?

HAROLD. Yes. If caught, they would hang me as a spy. For the first time since we parted, nearly five years ago, have I been near enough to come to you. Knowing full well that my presence here was most unwelcome to you, but hoping against hope that your heart had softened toward your husband, I came. My great love for you mastered me and in spite of the peril I passed through the British lines, asking only for a glance of your sweet face, and a word from your lips, e'en though it be but a whisper. My advances you have flung aside; but I can again do my duty, happy in the memory of this stolen visit to you. (*goes to her—she steps back*) Why do you shrink from me, are you angry because I am here?

MARGARET. 'Tis five years, you say, since you left— you are almost a stranger.

HAROLD. Yes, 'tis five years! To me they have seemed ages, filled as they have been with privation in the camp—hunger on the march—peril in the field; yet in my heart was graven the image of the wife I had left at home, and day or night, sleeping or waking, the thought of you was uppermost in my memory. The day I fell wounded—I went down with your name on my lips, and a prayer for your safety. Only an hour ago, when I dashed through the British lines amid a fusilade of leaden hail, I murmured your name and fancied it was the talisman that kept me from harm. Oh, my darling, do you mean what you

say? Am I a stranger in my own house? If you had ever loved me, all the old affections would rush back like the pent-up torrents of years, and a moment's presence would bridge the gulf between us, no matter how deep or how wide it had become. But still you say that I am a stranger—and greet me with a haughty coldness. What does my visit interfere with? Were you expecting company; or hearing of my death, have you so soon found another suitor to fill my place in your heart. In mercy's name, Margaret, tell me 'tis not true! Tell me that my fears are groundless; that you are still my own darling Margaret. Tell me that the camp gossips lie!

MARGARET. And what do they say?

HAROLD. They say that Major Sidney Wolfe has his headquarters beneath this roof, and that Margaret Peyton has so far forgotten her sense of honor as a wife, as to openly receive his attentions in spite of the fact that they are the talk of all New York! Tell me they lie, Margaret, for I can't believe you faithless. Tell me, as you have in the days of old, "I love you, Harold, I am yours, now and forever."

MARGARET *reels and nearly falls—supports herself with hand on table.* HAROLD *starts toward her.*

HAROLD. You are faint!

MARGARET. No, no, don't touch me!

HAROLD. *(sees ring—staggers back)* Margaret, where did you get that ring?

MARGARET. Ah! *(hiding ring)* No matter. 'Tis only the gift of a friend.

HAROLD. A friend, eh! Then the camp gossips speak the truth, and he makes you presents. And only yesterday, Heaven forgive me, I nearly strangled one of my best friends, because he came and informed me what the scandalmongers were saying. (*grasps her hand*) Let me look at it!

MARGARET. No, no, you must not! you must not!

HAROLD. My God! it is true! it is true! I did not think you capable of that. You—a Prescott; and—my wife; accept a ring from your husband's worst foe. They speak truly, when they say you love this man. He is your lover! You, his paramour!

MARGARET. Harold Peyton, you lie!

HAROLD. No, I speak the truth. You dare not deny it—you that stand there with eyes that drop before mine for shame—nay, eyes that you raise with defiance. Brazen—brazen—oh! my God, my God, tell me that I am mistaken, that you are still true to your wedding vows. (*pause*) You are silent. Tell me that you are still my own dear Margaret.

MARGARET. No, no, let me alone!

HAROLD. 'Tis now plain why I am so unwelcome. He is to be here, tonight. Well, the Wolfe may come, but he'll find the faithful watch-dog on guard at the wife's door. Although I can weep at my wife's perfidy, I shall no longer endure this shame. 'Tis well I came tonight.

MARGARET. You will watch in vain. He is more likely to be found where you came from than here.

HAROLD. I came from Morristown; what does he there? (*pause*) Speak! what do you mean?

MARGARET. Nothing! I spoke without thinking.

HAROLD. Then you spoke the truth. So, Major Wolfe, a British officer, may be found in our camp, tonight. Your lover, a spy in your husband's camp, as well as a traitor in your husband's house.

MARGARET. No, no!

HAROLD. Perhaps another secret expedition and midnight attack. I must warn the camp.

MARGARET. It is too late now.

HAROLD. Our army is always on the alert for such surprises, and needs no warning from me. We have had many of them, and if there is such an expedition on foot tonight; so much the worse for those engaged in it.

MARGARET. Major Wolfe's men are well on their way to Morristown; even if you do pass safely through the British lines, you will only meet them returning with your commander-in-chief.

HAROLD. Another attempt to seize Washington? What folly!

MARGARET. Folly! Not when aided by traitors in your own camp!

HAROLD. What! traitors in our camp? Pshaw! what should you, a woman, know of such affairs. Oh! Margaret, could I only awaken the old love! 'Tis a pity that I must leave you when matters are so wrong between us; when I would give ten years of my life for an hour in which to win back your love. But I forget—treason in our camp, you say. There is danger then—there is always a possibility. Wont you take my hand? (pause) O, Margaret, let me clasp

you in my arms once more. Think how I have loved you and for the sake of olden times, bestow upon me one kiss—then I must go!

MARGARET. Go! Where?

HAROLD. Back to camp, to warn the troops of this expedition.

MARGARET. 'Tis hours since they left. Even if you should overtake them, do you think they would permit you to pass?

HAROLD. Perhaps I might beat Major Wolfe in this as he has beaten me—elsewhere. Perchance I know the Jersey roads, better than I have known my wife's heart. I'll put the army on the alert, treason or no treason.

MARGARET. (*clings to him*) You shall not go!

HAROLD. (*struggling*) Release me!

MARGARET. A moment ago, you asked for time to win back my love. Take the time now; you may not find the task as hard as you may think. I have never ceased to love you from the depths of my heart.

HAROLD. Would to Heaven that I could believe you; but 'tis only a plea to keep me here—to keep me from my duty. I dare not; will not stay! I must go!

MARGARET. No, no! I love you, my husband!

HAROLD. If you love me, you will not detain me!

MARGARET. If you love me, you will remain!

HAROLD. Not one moment. Time is precious now. Do not tempt me. I will soon return.

MARGARET. If you go now, you shall never see me again. You are breaking my arm.

HAROLD. And you are breaking my heart. Let me go!

MARGARET. You will have to kill me first! You shall not spoil my scheme.

HAROLD. Yours!

MARGARET. Yes, mine! Mine against your commander; against your cause—your cause that I hate, because it has ruined my hopes forever.

HAROLD. Margaret!

MARGARET. Were you fool enough to think that because I was wedded to you, it would keep me from fighting your cursed cause. I became your wife, not because I loved you; but that I might go to London. Failing in that—I was yours no longer. I hate you!

HAROLD. God pity me. A moment ago you professed to love me.

MARGARET. Aye, to save him!

HAROLD. You confess your guilty love? Why does not a just God strike you down?

MARGARET. Love him! yes, with all my heart and soul, and you shall not spoil his work and mine—you must kill me first! By heavens, I'll call the patrol!

HAROLD. Would you deliver me to the enemy?

MARGARET. For his sake, yes! (*he catches her—they struggle*) Help! Help!

HAROLD. (*forcing her to her knees*) Silence! you fiend, or I'll kill you.

MARGARET. Strike me, if you dare!

HAROLD. (*overcome*) I cannot, I cannot.

MARGARET. (*at window*) Surround this house!
A rebel spy is here. (HAROLD *starts toward her*)
Stand back! *They struggle.*

HAROLD. (*flinging her aside*) God pity you!

Exit HAROLD through window.

VOICE. (*outside*) Halt! (*shot outside*)

MARGARET *at window*— screams— falls.

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT FOUR.

SCENE: *Parlor in the Prescott home.* MATTHIAS enters L. U. E., *rise of curtain—goes to fireplace—replenishes the fire—cleans off the hearth.*

MATTHIAS. Strange things happened around this house, last night, and I fear it bodes no good to anyone beneath this roof. About nine o'clock, I was sitting in my accustomed place in the hallway, waiting for Mr. Prescott to come from the office, when all at once I was startled to hear the sound of voices, coming as it were, from Margaret's room. It was her voice I am sure, and I would swear that the other was her husband's. I know that no one had entered the house since twilight. First, I could hear her voice in angry expostulation; then his, first entreating, then threatening. I could not hear what was said. All at once the entire house was jarred as if some one had fallen heavily—then a shot was fired—a cry of anguish rang out from the room above; then all was silent as the grave. I hastened to the door and peered out into the darkness—not a sound could I hear. Then I went up to her room—but all was shrouded in darkness. I questioned her this morn-

ing, but she only laughed at me and said that I had only had a naughty dream. I would stake my life on it that I was wide awake, and that it is an omen of impending evil. (*looks off L.*) Here comes the devil now.

Enter SIDNEY, L. U. E.

SIDNEY. Matthias, is Mr. Prescott at home?

MATTHIAS. He is, sir.

SIDNEY. Kindly tell him that I am the bearer of sad news and wish to speak to him at once.

MATTHIAS. (*aside*) I knew it, I knew it. (*aloud*) I will inform him that you are waiting. Be seated, sir.

Exit R. 2. E.

SIDNEY. Thank heaven! everything has worked like a charm. Riding in full retreat, I had an excellent opportunity to repay Master Dick's insolence with a dose of lead. No one suspects that I myself fired the fatal shot. Of course, he was wounded as we entered the ambuscade. He knew entirely too much for my comfort—poor fellow!

Enter STEPHEN, R. 2. E.

STEPHEN. Matthias tells me that you have sad tidings for me. Be pleased to make this interview brief.

SIDNEY. As brief as friendship. Your son, as you know, was a member of my staff. Last night, he accompanied a select number of my command on a secret expedition, and while on our way we fell into a rebel ambuscade. So sudden was the attack,

that it forced a hasty retreat. Among others, your son fell wounded, I fear fatally; at least, our surgeon has but slight hopes of his recovery. He is now in our hospital, where I have made every arrangement for his comfort.

STEPHEN. (*offering his hand*) I thank you. I will hasten to his side and see what can be done. Oh, Richard, my poor boy, must I lose you, too. (*Exit R.*)

SIDNEY. Well, old man, I am afraid you will be a little too late. Ha! ha! ha! The old man's burden is indeed a heavy one. A patriot sympathizer at heart, whose family are loyalists—except his eldest son, who is a disgrace to the mother that bore him. And now, his favorite son lies dead. It nearly broke his father's heart when he enlisted under the banner of King George. Ah, well, such is life. But, now to see Margaret. It is imperative that I leave for London at once and if possible I shall go tonight. But not without her.

Enter MARGARET, down stairway.

SIDNEY. Ah, Margaret! I have returned. (*takes her hands.*)

MARGARET. And I need not ask you; you have failed.

SIDNEY. Yes, we had not yet arrived at the appointed rendezvous, when from both sides of the road, a heavy fire was poured into our little band of troopers, and we were compelled to fly for our lives.

MARGARET. I am sure you did the very best you could.

SIDNEY. They must have been warned of our coming and were lying in wait for us. They nearly surrounded us. Nine of our men were killed outright and three more seriously wounded, one of them your brother.

MARGARET. Poor Dick! where is he?

SIDNEY. At the hospital, where every care is being bestowed on him. Your father is by this time at his side. A little later in the day, I will take you to him.

MARGARET. You are very kind to me, Sidney.

SIDNEY. It is probably the last favor that I may grant. I leave by tonight's ship for London.

MARGARET. Tonight! So soon. Why not wait until we hear from Ned, and try once more. The next time we must succeed.

SIDNEY. To remain is out of the question. I have received a six months leave of absence and must go to England at once. Margaret, last night I failed to accomplish that which would have gained for us both great honors; but my love is as deep and as loyal as before. You have pledged me your love—come with me, tonight, and leave this cursed country for one where you can command the respect you deserve. You shall be my queen; I your abject slave, and together amid the frivolity of gay old London; we shall forget all the hated past. You will go, Margaret?

MARGARET. Oh! I cannot, I cannot.

SIDNEY. Then you prefer a life of misery among these familiar scenes, every one of which brings to your mind the saddest recollections of the past; to a

life unalloyed content in a land where you will know naught save happiness.

MARGARET. No, no, it is not that. Here I am unhappy it is true, but I am free from want. Should I go with you, you might soon tire of me, as a child of a new plaything, and then cast me adrift in a strange land, to be dashed to and fro by the cruel billows of adversity and at last be hurled upon the rocks of destruction.

SIDNEY. Margaret, come here! My love, so long as life shall last, I shall know nothing but the deepest devotion for you. Time alone can prove the sincerity of my love. Can't you trust me, my darling?

MARGARET. Oh, Sidney, I do, I do! (*throwing her arms around him*) If I cannot trust you, whom in all this world can I trust?

SIDNEY. As true as there is a heaven above us, you can trust me, and that trust I will never betray. Do you remember your promise—the night I gave you the ring?

MARGARET. Yes. I love you, Sidney, I am yours now and forever.

SIDNEY. And if the man you loved—if I—should come to be mean and unworthy before the world—

MARGARET. But you are not.

SIDNEY. If I were?

MARGARET. My king!

SIDNEY. If you saw me sneered at, even hunted as a criminal; but still loving, worshiping—

MARGARET. I would love you still—with the love that is the all—that is greater than the world. Love

that is above honors, above name—that outlasts them all. When I loved you, your fate became mine. Sidney, you will always love me, wont you?

SIDNEY. Yes, Margaret, I will. I must go to headquarters and procure my passports. My darling, make what preparations are necessary and we will go together. You will be ready when I return?

MARGARET. Yes!

SIDNEY. Until then, Au Revoir. *Exit L. U. E.*

MARGARET. The die is cast. Right or wrong, I have chosen and it is too late to turn back. Only a few short hours and I will forever place myself beyond the hope of returning. Come what may, my life could not be more miserable than it has been. Henceforth my duty shall be to forget all else save the love I owe my British Major. I will prepare for his return. *Crosses to stairway.*

Enter NED, R. 2. E., his head bandaged.

MARGARET. (*startled*) Ned! you here?

NED. Yes, I am here! Look at me. No doubt, you are delighted to see your dear brother?

MARGARET. Of course I am always glad to see you, Ned.

NED. You are a fine specimen of the loving sister, you are! But I'll have my revenge. I came here on purpose to expose your true character, you brazen hussy! You didn't think I'd live to tell the tale, did you?

MARGARET. Are you speaking to me, sir?

NED. Yes, I'm speaking to you. You thought if your husband would have me hanged, he would win promotion for himself.

MARGARET. That's a lie!

NED. A lie, is it? Dare you deny that your husband came to visit you last night and that you exposed your hellish plot to him? Do you think you can make your British sweetheart, Sidney Wolfe, believe it is a lie, when he learns that you sent him on this secret mission, that you might betray him to your husband and that 'twas through your perfidy, that your own brother was fatally wounded.

MARGARET. I don't deny that Harold was here. Taking me by surprise, he found cause to suspect our plot, but it was through no fault of mine. That's the truth, and we shall see whether Major Wolfe believes you or me.

NED. You may be able to convince Sidney Wolfe, that you acted in good faith toward him, but I doubt if you can lead father to believe you innocent—I am going to tell him all.

MARGARET. You will not dare!

NED. Dare! Won't I!

MARGARET. No! Do you forget what you are; a fugitive from justice, even now on parole during good behavior; think you, that when he learns that you were ready and willing—for a few paltry dollars, to deliver to the enemy the safety of the camp, in which his whole being is centred; that he will hesitate to turn you over for the punishment such traitors deserve.

NED. And do you think that when he learns of the perfidy of his favorite daughter—learns that she is the mistress of a British officer—that he will hesitate to drive her from beneath his roof in disgrace. You have masqueraded long enough under the cloak of your husband's untarnished name—Harold Prescott is a Continental soldier and a gentleman, and I am going to tear off the mask of deceit and show you in your true light.

MARGARET. (*crosses to him*) Dare to utter one word against me to my father and I'll fasten my fingers around your traitorous throat and still its cruel work forever.

Enter STEPHEN, L. U. E.

STEPHEN. (*comes down*) Daughter! What would you do?

MARGARET. Silence the lying accusations of this wretch, who seeks to destroy a sister's honor.

STEPHEN. (*sees NED*) So it is you, sir! Why are you not in camp?

NED. Because I am here to tear off the mask of deceit and dishonor worn by that woman, and expose the baseness of her true character.

STEPHEN. What do you mean, sir!

NED. That since this war began, her conduct has been a living lie. While posing as a patriot's daughter—and under the protection of your roof—she has been in league with the British army for the betrayal of your cause.

STEPHEN. Impossible, sir; my own flesh and blood could not be so devoid of honor as to plot against the cause I hold as sacred.

NED. It is true, nevertheless; and the plot was hatched beneath this roof. If you do not believe me, ask her what she knows of last night's cursed work.

STEPHEN. Margaret, what do you know of this British plot? (*pause*) Answer me!

MARGARET. I dare not—it is not my secret alone.

STEPHEN. If there is a secret beneath my roof I have a right to know it and I command you to speak.

MARGARET. You command!

STEPHEN. Aye, command!

MARGARET. And I refuse. You forget, sir, I am no longer subject to a father's commands. (*starts for stairway*)

STEPHEN. You shall not leave this room. (*detains her*) When Harold left this house, four years ago, to battle for his country's liberty, he placed you in my keeping, until he should return. 'Tis time that I assume that guardianship over you, when I find that you have brought dishonor and disgrace upon his name by plotting against the cause he loves.

MARGARET. All allegiance to my king is my right.

STEPHEN. If allegiance to the king means treason to your husband, you have no right beneath Harold Peyton's roof. By heavens, I will know the truth.

MARGARET. Never from me.

STEPHEN. (*to Ned*) What have you to say, sir?

NED. Only this; that she and Major Sidney Wolfe entered into a conspiracy to kidnap Washington, and that the attempt was made last night.

MARGARET. Tell him also, that you were the traitor who, Judas-like, was to betray the safety of the camp.

STEPHEN. Can this be true? Leave this house at once, you treacherous scoundrel!

NED. Call me hard names if you will. You have never been the father to me that you should have been. If you had tempered your justice with mercy and gave me a kind word now and then, I might have had a different career. I erred, it is true; but you drove me from home, and what am I; a despised fugitive, with the prison walls staring me in the face. You made me what I am. Are you not proud of it? (*pushes back hat, showing wound on temple*) Do you see that? That's a present from my dearly beloved brother-in-law, Harold Peyton. You see, he came here last night to visit his devoted wife and from her learned all. He outrode the British, found me waiting at the rendezvous, presented me with this sabre-cut, and gave the alarm. I leave it to you, sir, if your daughter there, after playing the traitor to her husband, for the sake of her lover—

Enter ELIZABETH, R. 2. E.

STEPHEN. For the sake of her lover? What do you mean by that?

NED. Don't you understand English, sir?

MARGARET. It's a lie; a cruel malicious lie. Sidney Wolfe is a gentleman, you insolent wretch!

NED. Any knave is a gentleman to his mistress.

ELIZABETH. Stephen, this is an outrage. Will you permit such insulting remarks made about your daughter?

MARGARET. Father, you surely will not heed the malicious lies of such a cur. He even accuses me of betraying the expedition to my husband.

NED. Harold was here last night, for he told me so, and that she exposed the entire plot to him; but that proves nothing. Women do strange things. A streak of repentance, maybe, or a lover's quarrel. (*to MARGARET*) You would not have entered into a scheme like that with a man like him, unless you had a pretty close understanding of another kind. Oh, I know your whole damn sex.

ELIZABETH. Stephen, this is scandalous.

STEPHEN *crosses to L. U. E.—opens door—steps back.*

STEPHEN. (*to NED*) There is the door. Go! and never again dare you to darken it with your evil self.

STEPHEN *crosses slowly to door; pauses, then exits.* STEPEN *closes the door and comes down stage, slowly.*

STEPHEN. (*grasping MARGARET*) Tell me the truth. Are you guilty of this shame? Oh! God, that a child of mine should so far forget her honor as to commit such treason. Speak! I say, or I'll choke the life out of you.

MARGARET. (*kneeling*) Mercy, mercy!

STEPHEN. What mercy do you deserve! You inhuman wretch, a traitor to your husband and the land of your birth—the mistress of a British officer!

MARGARET. No, no, father, not that, not that!

STEPHEN. Aye, all of that!

Enter MATTHIAS L. U. E., with message, which he hands

*STEPHEN, and then exits. STEPHEN reads message
---crumples it in his hand---staggers.*

MARGARET. (*goes to him*) Father, you are ill!

STEPHEN. (*recovering*) Don't touch me. Not content with bringing this disgrace upon your family, you sacrifice your brother upon the altar of your base desires—you murdereress!

MARGARET. No, no!

ELIZABETH. Murderess! Father, are you mad?

STEPHEN. No! Our dearly loved Dick, who in his devotion to his mother, enlisted under the banner of her choice, was by that fiend sent upon last night's cursed expedition, and now lies cold in death.

ELIZABETH. My boy! not dead! not dead!

STEPHEN. Aye, dead, and the cause lays at our daughter's door.

MARGARET. Don't, father, don't!

STEPHEN. Don't call me thy father—for you are no daughter of mine! I have no daughter now. You are a thing I will not name—a fiend, with the brand of Cain upon your brow. Out of my house—I disown you. Go! I say. Go!

MARGARET. (*kneeling*) Mercy! mercy!

STEPHEN. You can expect no mercy from me. Seek your British lover, you hussy, and tell him to care for you. Out of my house, I say!

ELIZABETH. Stephen, do not send her away. Remember, she is your favorite. Poor child, what will become of her. For my sake, father, let her remain. Harold wouldn't cast her aside, guilty though she may be.

MARGARET. Oh! mother, mother!

STEPHEN. She must go, madam, and you shall not interfere. 'Tis for me to command. Stand aside, she is no child of ours.

ELIZABETH. No matter how guilty she may be, Stephen, she is still my child! (*chimes ring*) Father, do you forget the day, Christmas day. Even now the chimes are pealing forth "Peace on earth, Good-will to all men." Today is not the time for sorrow or curses; but for happiness and peace.

STEPHEN. There is the door; go! Never again let me behold thy face.

MARGARET. (*pleading*) Father!

STEPHEN. Go! (*Exit MARGARET, L. R. E.*) My deepest curses follow thee, wherever thou goest. Out of my sight forevermore. (*closes door*) Oh, God! my burden is greater than I can bear. My eldest son, a criminal; my youngest, dead; and my favorite daughter, dishonored. *Reels and falls.*

END OF FOURTH ACT.



ACT FIVE.

SCENE: *Fashionable Lodgings in London.* As curtain rises MARGARET is discovered seated on divan R. She shows evidence of suffering.

MARGARET. Another dreary day has passed; every hour of which has seemed an age. Miserable as I thought myself in the days gone by, I now realize that they were only made so by my own wild desires for a life of pomp and show. Child that I was, I thought the dross of society was a metal of purest alloy. But I have learned the bitter truth, "all that glitters is not gold." The bread of repentance, we sometimes are forced to eat in maturer years, is made from the wild oats sown in earlier life.

Enter NELLE. L. 2. E.

NELLE. Margaret, it is nearly time for the ball, and you are not ready.

MARGARET. I have changed my mind; I am not going.

NELLE. Not going! Why not?

MARGARET. Because I could not endure such a scene of gayety. I am a miserable wretched woman.

NELLE. Wretched! You have no right to be. You should be supremely happy in the conquests you have made during the past six months.

MARGARET. Perhaps I should be; but I am not. Driven by despair, I plunged recklessly into the life of a social butterfly; but in the very moments of my triumph, the past like a grim spectre confronts me, and I am no longer able to hide my misery. Ladyhood is only a veneer. Under it are all the passions of womanhood; the love that can be betrayed, the hate that can plan and the fury that can execute revenge.

NELLE. Poor sister. Cheer up and all will end right yet—get ready and accompany us to the Embassy ball to-night.

MARGARET. All my life, like a bird, I have been beating my wings against the bars of a gilded cage. I have sinned enough. I will sin no more.

NELLE. Sinned, Margaret!

MARGARET. Yes, my life is a daily lie; striving to prove to the world that I am a happy, joyous woman, when I am suffering the keenest misery for my perfidy to my husband. I am not going to live so, longer. What is a woman without the man she loves? I am going to seek Harold, and when I find him, I will cast myself at his feet and implore his forgiveness.

NELLE. You love him, Margaret, as in days of old.

MARGARET. I was in love; I have not forgotten. One tires of an empty life; of a vain stretching forth

of hands. Tomorrow I shall make arrangements to leave London forever, and I pray that in dear old America, we may meet again, never more to part.

NELLE. Perhaps he will not grant the forgiveness you crave.

MARGARET. Whether he will or not, it is my duty to go to him and ask pardon for the past. Is it not written "those whom He hath joined together, let no man divide." I acknowledge the infinity of a Wisdom beyond the power of poor humanity to deny and with the aid of a Providence, that never deserts you in your hour of need, I will seek for my husband

praying trustfully for the pardon accorded when truly sought (*looking upward*) and for a home hereafter.

NELLE. You are a noble woman, Margaret, and deserve much happiness in return for the misery you have endured in the past. A man's friendship may reach far into one's nature; but, it has been willed, greater is the love between man and woman, and the greatest of all is the love of a good woman for a man.

MARGARET. But I am not a good woman-- in my weakness I have sinned, but I have repented that sin. I have read somewhere that "adversity is the emery wheel of the soul," and surely all traces of my sin have been effaced by my sufferings.

NELLE. There are brighter days in store for you so cheer up. Forget your sorrows for the present, and go to the ball with Jack and I.

Enter JOHN, R. 2. E.

JOHN. (*announcing*) Mr. John Q. Reynolds.

NELLE. Bid him enter. *Exit JOHN, R. 2, E.*

MARGARET. I will go to my room: I am in no mood to see visitors; not even dear old Jack.

Enter JACK, R. 2, E., as MARGARET is leaving, L.

JACK. Ah, Mrs. Peyton, don't let me drive you away.

MARGARET. You are not driving me away. I would be delighted to remain, but I am ill tonight, and am better alone. *Exit L. 2, E.*

NELLE. Jack, dear; do you know what ails Margaret?

JACK. No. How should I know?

NELLE. You don't know anything.

JACK. Do you?

NELLE. I know this much. Margaret is slowly grieving her life away. The news of her father's tragic death was a terrible shock to her. And, at last, she realizes how good and true Harold was; and her love for him has mastered all else. Her only desire is to find him and beg his forgiveness. She will leave for America tomorrow.

JACK. Tomorrow! Let us go with her. I am tired of this English society anyway. Let's go home, get married, settle down and raise —

NELLE. Ah, ah!

JACK. Lots of pretty flowers, and so forth.

NELLE. Oh, I don't want to get married.

JACK. Why not?

NELLE. It's nothing but a life of misery.

JACK. Don't you think that marriage ever brings happiness?

NELLE. To a man, perhaps; to a woman, never.

JACK. Every woman has but one faithful attachment in life—love.

NELLE. True.

JACK. Yes, love—with herself.

NELLE. That's unkind. You always said you loved me dearly—truly.

JACK. I do. In spite of our long separation, I love you more and more, each day. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

NELLE. Yes—of some one else! When did you first love me!

JACK. (*solemnly*) If—if I tell you, you will never tell anyone?

NELLE. Never—never.

JACK. Then I don't know.

NELLE. You don't know?

JACK. No, I really don't. Love at first sight is a curious thing; one that a person can't describe, you know. The fact is, a pretty girl with dreamy blue eyes can teach a man anything else in the world, but common sense.

NELLE. I don't believe in love at first sight—I believe in taking the second look. Say, Jack, do you believe that marriages are made in Heav'n?

JACK. Not by men who experimented on earth.

NELLE. If you think so; why are you so anxious to marry. The ancient Greeks claimed that love and death were sisters, and that he or she who loves

deeply, may in one short life-time suffer the agonies of death many times. And my own sister's misery has proven their theory true.

JACK. Margaret's life has indeed been a sorrowful one. Still there are many happy marriages. It is the command of Holy Writ that man shall not live alone.

NELLE. How should I look if I married you?

JACK. Charming, I am sure.

NELLE. Well, I'll give you my promise. The day Harold and Margaret are reconciled, shall be our wedding day. Now ain't you happy?

JACK. (*dejected*) Oh, yes; but I was wondering if that will ever be. My dear—

NELLE. Don't call me "my dear"—call me sweetheart. A husband always calls his wife "my dear," when there is company present. (*sighs*)

JACK. What's the matter?

NELLE. I was just thinking of the great chances a girl takes on her first proposal of marriage.

JACK. Do you mean if she accepts or declines it?

NELLE. Either way.

JACK. Oh! (*pause*) Say, I was awful afraid to ask you for the first kiss.

NELLE. Afraid of what—

JACK. Afraid you would let me have it without protest. But, Nelle, in spite of all, you are a dear, dear girl.

NELLE. Well, I hope you do think so, Jack dear, it would be hard to know that you didn't, when we have grown up together.

Enter JOHN. R. 2. E.

JOHN. The carriage is at the door. *Exit* R. 2. E.

NELLE. Let us go at once. I do so dread being among the late arrivals. *(crosses to door, L. 2. E.)* Margaret! We are going, dear.

MARGARET. *(entering)* I hope both of you will have a pleasant evening. Take care of her, Jack, and don't let her catch cold. *(kisses NELLE)* Good night, sister; good night, Jack.

JACK AND NELLE. Good night! *Exit* R. 2. E.

MARGARET. How I wish they had remained at home, tonight. *(crosses and locks door, R. 2. E.)* My nerves and brain feel strangely overwrought. A few moments ago I fancied I saw a face looking in at my window—the face of the fiend who lured me from my home and husband—the face of the man for whose sake I became the miserable wretch that I am—the cruel smiling face of Sidney Wolfe. I thought that I had forever rid myself of his presence—but he is my Nemesis. As soon as I had sufficiently recovered from the shock, I rushed to the window and flung it open—no one was there. I feel a foreboding of impending evil. This room is stifling. I must have air.

MARGARET *crosses to L. 2. E., and throws back the curtains.* As she does so, she utters a scream and staggers back. *Enter SIDNEY, hurriedly.*

MARGARET. Ah! you here.

SIDNEY. At last, Margaret, at last! For weeks I have been searching for you; peering into every face on the streets—craving to see your beautiful image.

MARGARET. Why are you here? What do you expect from me?

SIDNEY. What should I expect from one who has turned the heads of all fashionable London—the gay butterfly that has flitted hither and thither among her many admirers, leaving nothing but heartaches in her path; yet in whose presence all other queens of society fade into oblivion; and the king himself is humbled. Still I, like a foolish moth, cannot help circling around the flame which inevitably means my destruction.

MARGARET. (*aside*) He loves me still!

SIDNEY. I am here, Margaret, to keep my promise and claim my reward.

MARGARET. Keep your promise? What is your word worth, Sidney Wolfe? You were once, to me, an idol on a pinnacle; you are now a broken image in the dust. You have no claim upon me.

SIDNEY. But, Margaret, I cannot spare you—I love you.

MARGARET. Love me—you love me? You love yourself, you mean; your ease, your comfort, your pleasures! Love me! Recall the falsehood, Sidney Wolfe, 'tis deeds we women want, not words!

SIDNEY. Do you not believe me?

MARGARET. No, not one word. Since the night that my father cast me out of his house, I have learned many bitter truths. Among them, that men will lie! You taught me that lesson.

SIDNEY. What! I?

MARGARET. Yes, lying is one of your clever faculties. When you left me alone in that pitiable tenement, saying that your father was dying and that you must hasten to his side; but that you would soon return— you lied! A moment ago, you stood there and professed to love me— you lied. 'Tis not through love that you seek me; but for the protecting cloak of my success in which you wish to shroud the evil of your past. You have stripped the mask from your face, and at last, I know you as a wolf preying upon society.

SIDNEY. Long before I went to America, I fell in the toils of a wicked woman, whom in my blind infatuation I married. When I left, promising to return to make you my wife, I believed that woman dead. When I arrived in Bristol—I found the father, whom I loved, dead; the wife, whom I loathed, living. I dared not return to tell the truth. But she is dead now, as Heaven is my witness.

MARGARET. Don't add lie to lie, or oath to oath! A woman either loves or hates, and how could I care for the villain, who broke his faith. I once blindly believed every word you uttered; I now as thoroughly doubt.

SIDNEY. And yet you love me!

MARGARET. No! *(takes his ring from her finger)* Here is the ring that you swore had never been dishonored; and with which you pledged undying love and affection. *(throws ring at his feet)* There it is; pick it up and treasure it as a symbol of my undying hate. What I once thought was love for you, was

but a flimsy sentiment, as unlike love as a glow-worm is unlike the sun. I have no love for you. All my heart and soul is centered in but one, my wronged and suffering husband. My life is his alone, for without him all else is dead. That is the love a woman gives. Fire or flood could not keep me from his side, if he called.

SIDNEY. And do you think he will ever bestow even one thought upon the woman who plotted to to wreck his life and who was the self-confessed paramour of his enemy.

MARGARET. You lie, Sidney Wolfe! Beware! I can hate as deeply as I have loved. I despise a liar; I detest an oath-breaker. In the sight of God, you are both!

SIDNEY. Your protests are useless; you must and shall be mine! *Starts for her.*

MARGARET. Stand back! Touch me not, I command you. Attempt to detain me, and the hand that has caressed you, may strike!

SIDNEY. You would not strike me, Margaret; remember, you and I have an interest in common.

MARGARET. The child is dead. We have nothing in common now; not even humanity. Love is hate now. Let me pass.

SIDNEY. No! you shall not cross the threshold of this room, until you fulfill your promise. I am not playing this game of hearts for nothing. I loved you in New York, and would have fought for you there; I love you still, and will fight for you now. The cause of King George was buried beneath the ruins

of defeat; but I will triumph. I am not going to be outwitted now. I am going to make you my wife. I swear this, in your presence, woman, by the throne of Heaven!

MARGARET. You have sworn to do this?

SIDNEY. I have!

MARGARET. At the feet of fate, one of these days you will be compelled to cast a broken oath!

SIDNEY. Never! You shall be my wife?

MARGARET. Your wife—your wife! Sooner than stand at the altar with you, I would kill myself. I tell you proudly, that I will yet kneel at my husband's feet and implore his pardon for the past.

SIDNEY. And I say that you never shall. You fancy there is a barrier that I cannot break—you are mistaken; I will shatter it to the winds, and living or dead, you shall be mine. *Starts toward her.*

MARGARET. Approach another step and I will cry for help.

SIDNEY. You dare not!

MARGARET. Dare not!

SIDNEY. No, you might alarm the household, 'tis true; but how will you explain my presence here.

MARGARET. *(kneeling)* Oh! in mercy's name, have pity on me, and leave this room at once. Grievously I have erred in the past, but now I beg of you to go! If you ever cared for me, I pray you, go!

SIDNEY. *(lifting her up)* Care for you; I always have, and shall until eternity!

Enter HAROLD, L. 2, E.

HAROLD. Pardon my intrusion.

MARGARET. Great Heavens!

HAROLD. Margaret, do I disturb an assignation?

SIDNEY. Who is this man, Margaret, and by what right does he so address you?

HAROLD. It is for me to demand an answer to that question.

MARGARET. For mercy's sake, Sidney—speak—

HAROLD. Margaret, is this man your lover?

SIDNEY. And if I am her lover and dare avow it—who, sir, are you?

HAROLD. (c.) Her husband!

SIDNEY. Harold Peyton!

HAROLD. I am Captain Harold Peyton and you are Major Sidney Wolfe. We have been enemies in time of war; we are now enemies in time of peace. My flag is not your flag, but under your banner and beneath this roof, we are going to settle our hates forever. (*leads MARGARET off L. 2.*) Draw and defend yourself, Major, I am here to fight!

SIDNEY. Let us at it then, and may fortune crown her favorite. (*they fight—HAROLD is disarmed*) Victory! Victory!

NED watches duel from outside window—when HAROLD is disarmed he goes to door, R. 2. E., and finds it locked. At SIDNEY's cry of "Victory"—MARGARET enters and throws herself in front of HAROLD, foiling SIDNEY's attempt to kill her husband.

MARGARET. Hold! Thou shalt not kill!

NED bursts open the door—picks up HAROLD'S sword.

NED. Not yet! I am here to avenge my brother's murder.

SIDNEY. Ned Prescott, the devil!

NED. Aye! Ned Prescott, the out-east, ex-thief, ex-traitor, or what you will, but your superior nevertheless. Defend yourself.

They fight—NED slowly forcing SIDNEY up stage to the balcony window. Finally, NED disarms SIDNEY and runs him through. SIDNEY staggers back through window and falls upon the balustrade, which breaks; hurling him to the street below.

NED. Margaret, that man will trouble you no more! To you and your husband, I now kneel for forgiveness for the past. Wild and sinful I have been in my youthful days, but at last, I have conquered myself and wish to make reparation for the evil I have committed.

MARGARET. Brother, you are freely forgiven.

NED. Harold Peyton, dark clouds have hung over you for many years. Margaret, like many a weak woman, has erred; but she was not wholly to blame. Sympathy saves more souls than curses. Many of the accusations, which have been made, were false and I trust to see you reunited.

HAROLD. I too wish for a reconciliation; but as yet I am not forgiven.

MARGARET. *(aside)* I cannot play this double part, longer. My heart will break. *(on her knees—aloud passionately)* Listen, Harry; you have long ago been forgiven, but my proud heart would not humble

itself to extend that pardon. You have much to forgive; when I have told you all—

HAROLD. Hush! *(lifts her up)* I am still your husband, Margaret, and even when I seemed to wrong you most, you were and ever have remained for me, the world's one woman!

MARGARET. Oh, Harold! in spite of all?

HAROLD. Many times rebellion arose within my heart, fermented by the love that smouldered there, and could only be put down with an iron hand.

MARGARET. And I only deserve your curses and reproaches. How I have wronged you.

HAROLD. Your love is life to me. I have hoped all through these gloomy years—hoped that you might learn how cruel, how unjust, you had been and return to me. I have tried to meet the worries and sorrows of life with a brave face—but, during the long and dreary months since last we met, Margaret, I have lived ages. Love is not the whole duty of mankind—sacrifice is sometimes better than fulfilment—it brings its own peace; a peace nothing else can give.

Enter JACK AND NELLE, R. 2. E.

MARGARET. And you forgive me, Harold?

HAROLD. *(taking her in his arms)* Yes, and love you as in days of old.

THE END.

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